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SUBJECT: NEW ZEALAND COUNTRY CLEARANCE FOR EPA OFFICIALS  
OSHIDA AND BISSONETTE, AUGUST 31-SEPTEMBER 2, 2004

REF: STATE 173225

1. Please see action request para 3.

2. Embassy welcomes and grants country clearance to EPA Officials Phil Oshida and Eric Bissonette to Christchurch, New Zealand from August 31 to September 2, 2004. The purpose of this trip is to visit utilities and regulators in Christchurch as part of a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) in drinking water systems tour.

3. Action Request: Embassy understands that no further assistance is required. Please advise Embassy of contact information for Christchurch. Reftel provided contact number at the Duxton Hotel in Wellington, although Wellington was not on the itinerary provided.

4. Embassy point of contact is Economic officer Joy Yamamoto.

Contact details are as follows:

Office: 644-462-6182

Fax: 644-472-3537

Cell: 027-446-4467

E-mail: yamamotojo@state.gov

5. Visitors should use local taxi service, which is generally safe, reliable and frequent. Taxi fare from the airport to downtown Christchurch hotels is approximately NZD35.

6. Travelers can exchange currency at the airport upon arrival and ATM machines are readily available throughout New Zealand.

7. Biosecurity Fines:

The government of New Zealand instituted fines for non-declared biosecurity hazards on travelers entering New Zealand with undeclared plant, animal or food material. Travelers found carrying these undeclared items will be immediately fined NZ\$200 (US \$150). Biosecurity is a serious issue in New Zealand and fines will be administered immediately and without warnings.

8. Security Assessment:

a. There are no local terrorist groups or support groups believed to be operating in New Zealand at this time. In light of the worldwide security alert all visitors should heighten their security awareness and report any unusual incidents to the regional security office.

b. Anonymous telephonic threats and obscure threat mail have occasionally targeted U.S. diplomatic missions in New Zealand. In response to U.S. policies and actions, various groups in New Zealand have demonstrated occasionally at the embassy in Wellington and at the consulate in Auckland. These demonstrations were of a small scale and were peacefully conducted. During these demonstrations, the host country police and protective services provided adequate protection to the embassy and consulate.

c. While New Zealand is considered a low threat crime environment, Wellington and Auckland have experienced an increase in violent and petty crimes. Home invasion robberies and assaults, once very rare, are becoming more frequent. Burglaries and thefts occur countrywide. Visitors should be aware that street crime is a daily occurrence in the larger cities, including Wellington and Auckland. Common sense precautions should be taken, especially at night, to avoid becoming a target of opportunity.

d. All forms of public transportation are generally safe at all times of the day.

Burnett